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SC TO ECI: CONSIDER KERALA, U.P. PLEA ON SIR DEADLINE EXTENSION

Supreme Court on Thursday asked Election Commission to consider representations seeking extension of time for SIR in Uttar Pradesh, Kerala

LAWYERS QUESTION HURRY IN WRAPPING UP SIR

A bench comprising CJI Surya Kant and Justice Joymalya Bagchi was told by senior lawyer Kapil Sibal that 25 lakh names were deleted in electoral rolls in Uttar Pradesh alone. SIR deadline in UP was December 3 and in Kerala was December 18. A lawyer questioned the hurry and said assembly polls in Uttar Pradesh are due in 2027 and yet EC was not giving time

LEAVE IT TO THE POLL PANEL: ECI COUNSEL

- The bench took note of the submissions and asked the ECI to take a decision "sympathetically" on any representations seeking an extension of time, while considering the ground realities
- Senior advocate Rakesh Dwivedi, for the Election Commission, opposed the submissions saying these should be left to the poll panel

Jan 6

IS WHEN FINAL HEARINGS ON PLEAS CHALLENGING SIR WILL BE TAKEN UP

CHENNAI ▪ MADURAI ▪ VIJAYAWADA ▪ BENGALURU ▪ KOCHI ▪ HYDERABAD ▪ VISAKHAPATNAM ▪ COIMBATORE ▪ KOZHIKODE ▪ THIRUVANANTHAPURAM ▪ BELAGAVI ▪ BHUBANESWAR ▪ SHIVAMOGGA ▪ MANGALURU ▪ TIRUPATI ▪ TIRUCHY ▪ TIRUNELVELI ▪ SAMBALPUR ▪ HUBBALLI ▪ DHARMAPURI ▪ KOTTAYAM ▪ KANNUR ▪ VILLUPURAM ▪ KOLLAM ▪ TADEPALLIGUDEM ▪ NAGAPATTINAM ▪ THRISSUR ▪ KALABURAGI

TORN PAPERS FLY AS G-RAM-G BILL REPLACING MAHATMA APPROVED

PREETHA NAIR AND PARVEZ SULTAN @ New Delhi

Torn papers sail past Shivraj Singh Chouhan in the Lok Sabha on Thursday | PTI

PARLIAMENT on Thursday passed the Viksit Bharat Guarantee for Rozgar and Ajeevika Mission (Gramin) Bill amid chaotic scenes in the Lok Sabha, with the Opposition raising slogans, tearing copies of the legislation, and standing on tables while holding posters of Mahatma Gandhi aloft, despite repeated appeals for order by Speaker Om Birla. The Rajya Sabha subsequently burnt the midnight oil to pass the bill after a five-hour debate.

The VB G-Ram-G Bill that replaces the two-decade-old Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee guarantees 125 days of employment for rural households in a financial year, with the government earmarking ₹95,000 crore for the initiative. A major shift under the new framework is a revised fund-sharing pattern, under which states will have to bear 40% share of the scheme's financial responsibility.

Moving the bill for passage after a nearly eight-hour-long debate, Union Minister for Rural Development Shivraj Singh Chouhan mounted a strong defence of the government's move, insisting that the legislation did not dilute Mahatma Gandhi's ideals but, instead, sought to strengthen them.

As Opposition MPs trooped to the well of the House, raising slogans against the government for dropping Gandhi ji's name from the rural jobs initiative and tearing copies of the bill and flinging it towards the chair, Chouhan hit out at the Congress for "insulting" the Mahatma and "killing" his ideals time and again.

Congress members Shafi Parambil, Dean Kuriakose and Hibi Eden stood on the table and others resorted to sloganeering in the well of the House.

Rejecting the charge that the Centre was deliberately removing Gandhi's name from the law, the minister alleged that the Congress had attached his name to the scheme for political reasons. "The name of Mahatma Gandhi was added in 2009 with an eye on elections," he said. Chouhan argued that the existing framework of MGNREGA had serious structural flaws, particularly in the allocation of funds among states.

In the Rajya Sabha, Digvijaya Singh (Cong) raised a point of order saying the bill was made available on the members' portal late in the evening and sufficient time was not given to submit amendments. Tiruchi Siva (DMK) too sought more time to file amendments. But the request was rejected.

Assembly passes Hate Speech Bill amid din

PRAMODKUMAR VAIDYA @ Belagavi

THE State Assembly on Thursday passed The Karnataka Hate Speech and Hate Crime (Prevention) Bill amidst din with an amendment on punishment.

Home Minister G Parameshwara told the House that the Bill was necessitated in the wake of a direction by the Supreme Court, which stated that any attempt to spread communal hatred and hate speech should be dealt with strongly. He said the Bill could bring substantial changes and help in preventing the dissemination, publication or promotion of hate speech and crimes.

The minister suggested an amendment to the punishment clause. The punishment for subsequent or repetitive offence was amended to be not less than two years, which may extend to seven years, as it was earlier 10 years.

Opposition leader R Ashoka said the Bill is against freedom of speech and freedom of the press. The BJP leader said that nothing more could be expected from the party that imposed Emergency on the country. He said all the Bill's proposals are part of BNS. He said the goal is to target the opposition parties and media.

He said the Bill could be used as a weapon for political animosity and cautioned the Congress that it could boomerang on them in future. P7

Another FTA in bag with duty-free Oman access to 99% Indian exports

PUSHPITA DEY @ New Delhi

PM Modi being conferred the Order of Oman by Sultan Haitham bin Tarik | PTI

AT a time when the country is diversifying its export market amid steep, unilateral trade tariffs levied by the US, India and Oman on Thursday signed a Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) under which 99% of Indian exports, by value, will have duty-free access to the Omani market.

In return, India will offer duty-free access to 78% of goods imported from Oman. In value terms, 95% of Oman's exports will have free access to the Indian market.

However, India ensured that sensitive sectors such as agriculture and dairy products are outside the trade deal's ambit.

The commerce ministry clarified that all major labour-intensive sectors — including gems and jewellery, textiles, leather, footwear, sports goods, plastics, furniture, agricultural products, engineering goods, pharmaceuticals, medical devices and automobiles — will receive full tariff elimination.

For products of export interest to Oman that are sensitive for India, the concessions are largely in the form of tariff-rate quota-based liberalisation.

The trade agreement is expected to provide respite to labour-intensive sectors affected by US tariffs. The pact was signed in Muscat by Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal and Oman's Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, Qais bin Mohammed Al Yousef, in the presence of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

For the first time, Oman raised the quota for intra-corporate transferees to 50% from 20% and extended the stay for contractual service suppliers to two years, with a possible two-year extension.

EXPRESS READ

Girl killed as concrete blocks fall into house

Bengaluru: A four-year-old girl died while two of her cousins and her mother sustained injuries when 12 concrete blocks crashed into their asbestos roofed house from the fourth floor of an under-construction building at Chinnappanahalli on Thursday | P3

3 held for gang rape of 19-year-old student

Bengaluru: Magadi police arrested three youth on charges of gang-raping a 19-year-old college student, blackmailing and threatening her. The main accused was in a relationship with the girl and had made a video of him sexually assaulting her | P3

WITH THIS ISSUE

CITY'S BEST WEEKEND GUIDE INDULGE — 116 PAGES, INCLUDING 96 OF INDULGE (TABLOID)

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Welcomes you to the
13th Convocation
19st December 2025 Friday | 11:00 a.m.
Venue: BLDE University Campus, Vijayapura
Chief Guest
Dr. M. K. Ramesh
President, Medical Assessment & Rating Board
National Medical Council, New Delhi
Will Deliver the Convocation Address
Gracious Presence
Shri M. B. Patil
President, BLDE Association & Hon'ble Minister, Large & Medium Scale Industries and Infrastructure Development, Government of Karnataka
President
Shri B. M. Patil
Hon'ble Chancellor, BLDE (Deemed to be University), Vijaypura
Will Preside over the Convocation
Prof. Dr. Y. M. Jayaraj
Pro-Chancellor
will grace the function
Prof. Dr. Arun Inamadar
Vice-Chancellor (Officiating)
will present University Report
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